

Reading:

Our reading is from Parker Palmer, Quaker teacher and writer, from his book

Let Your Life Speak; Tom Bolton will read:

Parker Palmer says that vocation is not a calling from something beyond ourselves but from our own truest selves—souls—our lives. He says that listening to one's life speak, peeling back the layers of what the world tells us to do, will help us to reveal our own vocation. He says we arrive in the world with gifts, and that through expectations placed on us we spend the first half of our lives learning to cover them up or distrust them, and second half trying to recover them.

Palmer says:

“Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening. I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about—quite apart from what I would like it to be about—or my life will never represent anything real in the world, no matter how earnest my intentions.

The insight is hidden in the word vocation itself, which is rooted in the Latin word for “voice”. Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity, not the standards by which I must live—but the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life.”

“Let Your Life Speak”

“Here is the world; beautiful and terrible things will happen.

Be not afraid.

Because this is what we are about:

We aren't here to own anything, but to receive everything;

We aren't here to finish anything, but to participate in something.

So forget your perfect offering.

There is a crack in everything.

That is how the light gets in.”

Let's practice something first: hands on our chest.

Clear our throats.

And now hum with me...*hmmmmm*.

And now open your mouth....*ahhhhhh*.

You feel the vibration?

You hear your voice?

You hear the voices of others?

So often we get stuck in our heads, thinking we are brains with feet,

and we forget that we are living, breathing

Bodies with voices, vibrations, warmth, presence, sound;

Hum with me again...*hummmmmm*.

Open your mouth again....*ahhhh*.

And as we hear our voices, let us be reminded of the words I have shared

Before from Reinhold Neihbur, author of the famous serenity prayer

And one of my favorite theologians, who said

That prayer isn't about hearing voices; it's about acquiring a voice.

Or as Parker Palmer said it so beautifully in the words Tom shared:

“Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity.”

So, this question as we acquire and hear our voices:

“Is the life I am living the life that wants to live in me?”

Sobering question, yes?

Have I, for too long, felt the hand on my back pushing me

To parent like that person, or climb the employment ladder like that person,

Or act your age like that person, or retire like that person,

Or preach like that person (!), grieve like that person,

Be an extrovert like person, grow up like that person?

Have I spent so much time admiring the gifts that someone else has

That I have forgotten to discover what gifts are mine?

Has the pressure on the back to perform, provide, excel, compete

In an economy that seems to favor the have's over the have-nots and have-some's

Caused you to wake in the middle of the night for fear of what

Will come next?

Is the voice in you, the voice telling you who you are...all-too-shy, reclusive,

Traumatized by the pretense to be someone else?

Do you know what gives you joy? What you're good at? How you can serve?
Have you ever lived in the place where those three places meet – joy, gifts, service
– which is the place where your life is telling you:

Nathan, Tom, Heather, Otto, Tim....this is the life that wants to live in you!

Friends, a few things, then a story:

First, these questions I just asked are questions for all of us, regardless of age,
stage, employment, or lack-there-of.

Our UU theology teaches us that all are worthy, all are welcome,

And that we belong to a prophet-hood of all believers.

What does that seminar-speak mean?

Well, in plain language it means that we are called.

You're thinking: *I am? By who? For what? Oh no!*

You may have grown up thinking, as I did, that vocation was something
Only priests or nuns or ministers had, as if God called only a few of us
And the rest were left to hump it to work every day, stuck in Pike traffic.
A belief which I come to find is pretty ridiculous.

Instead, I say this: vocation is universal; I say each of you have voice within you

That is trying to speak, and that your gifts, joy and opportunities to serve

Is how your life is telling you what you should be doing.

Call it God, call it destiny, call it Spirit of Your Life, call it Fred or Fran,

Call it Humanist Harriet.

I don't care what you call it as long as you know it is calling you, each of you.

No one is exempt; no one is discarded.

Everyone of us has purpose. All of us have a voice. All of us have us have ears.
All of us can listen.

That some of us have to labor harder to hear, or have to labor harder to be heard,
Should only motivate us more to create the kind of communities we want to live in.

Second, a true fact from my role as pastor, companion, minister who loves you,
A word I use intentionally and specifically:

The most common reason people come to talk to me is because, for one reason or
another, you feel, we all feel, at times, estranged from the life that is trying to live
in us.

You come saying you must be the only one; that everyone else in our bucolic
suburbs and white steeple church straight out of Hollywood casting is
Doing just fine, living the life intended for them, perfect relationship,
Perfect job security, cherubic children, fully actualized,
Home, body, and life always smelling of non-allergenic flowers.

“Are you kidding?” I ask you when you tell me.

“Want me to show you my emails?”

Which is my way of reminding you that coming to church is much less
About trying to express who you are, and much more about being reminded
And held accountable to the person you hope to be.

Or in other words: UUAC is both a crutch and compass.

A crutch because we’re all limping,

and a compass because we all need to find our bearings now and again.

Not for nothing do we call ourselves seekers instead of finders;

Not for nothing is our blue hymnal called *Singing the Journey* instead of *Singing
the Destination*.

And last; do you know the most important word of this sermon title:

Let Your Life Speak? “*Let.*”

Because sometimes the important thing we can do is not to crash through our life, trying to corner what is calling us forth.

Instead, I say: what it would be like, you Facebookers,

To skip over the friend requests of all those people from grade school or college

And instead click on the friend request from your soul?

Remember Heather’s prop from last week, the jar we can’t see through when we’re too busy and all shaken up?

How goes your stillness over the last week?

Have you let your life speak this week, or have you done more of the talking?

And now for our story, because the other thing about letting our lives speak

Is that sometimes the situation around us calls us to have a voice,

Even if we’re not quite ready, or wonder what impact we will have.

As Doug shared earlier, we are blessed today with the presence of Richard Ortiz

And his family, Richard who not even a week ago will still being detained

In Boston after completing his prison sentence in Norfolk.

But that changed last Monday, and now let me read from the email Meg Hyde

Sent to the team of volunteers who have been visiting Richard these last many years:

Hello all,

Continued progress today. Kathy, Doug, John and I all arrived to the courthouse by 8:00 this morning, expecting Richard's bond hearing to begin at 8:30. We soon learned that there had been a change in order of hearings and

Richard's would not be for a few hours, at the earliest (it seems this is very typical in immigration court and one should be prepared to hurry up and wait!). Doug and Kathy stayed as long as they could in hopes that their presence/voice would have a positive impact on the judge, which was very generous of them.

Sometime before 11:30 Randy, Richard's lawyer, retrieved John and me to testify individually (we were not allowed to hear each other's testimony). Neither of us were prepared for, in John's words, the "aggressive" cross examination, and we each felt we had not been as articulate as we had hoped, but found it gratifying to finally have the opportunity to speak on Richard's behalf.

After testifying, John and I were debriefing with Richard's mom Lydia and his brother. A lawyer (I assume) who was not part of Richard's case but had been in and out of the courtroom all morning and listened to our testimonies came out of the courtroom and asked if we were Unitarian Universalists. When we said yes, she patted her heart and gave us a thumbs up with a huge smile. Go UU's!!

I do not fully understand exactly what is happening now, but today seems the first day since Richard was paroled last summer that Richard received the outcome he deserves. Bond was granted (\$15,000) and Randy strongly advises posting bail. I am not sure what the process or timeline is from here.

The presence and commitment of the four members of our team made a big difference. Lydia was teary when thanking us and Randy mentioned multiple times what an impact our presence had. Thank you all for the support you give Richard and our team.

Many thanks,

Meg

Friends, did Meg and John let their life speak on behalf of Richard? Were they uncertain about the impact they would have? Yes.

Were they unsure of whether or not they would be heard? *Yes.*

Did they go ahead and speak anyway, because of what their care for Richard required of them, you could even say *CALLED* them to do. *Yes.*

Have they showed us, as Richard has showed us, too, what can happen

If we push past the fear, the risk, the cross-examination, the walls, the bars

That hold us back...and decide to LET our lives speak anyway? *Yes.*

“Is the life I am living the life that wants to live in me?”

A sobering question, yes, but also a freeing question.

In Richard’s example, this freedom is not a metaphor.

It doesn’t have to be a metaphor for us either.

What will it mean for you for you to let your life speak this day,

This week, this month, this year, this lifetime.

Where will you show up? What will you change? What will you keep?

For what and for whom will you speak.

Hum with me again...*hmmmmmm.*

Open our mouths.....*aaaaahhhh.*

Amen.

1) *Deep breath* – breath in the room, the light, the wholeness...

Breath out – the crazy political season, the complicated nature of Mother’s Day.

Body – hold yourself and your life with ‘lightness’ - not with heaviness, but with lightness.

Julia Ward Howe saying to us we have heard the cries of the world and we say peace. Hope. Peace. Hope. Redemption. We can be redeemed.

2) this little girl born in Vietnam, fuzzy hair, still remember going to airport to pick her up when I was three – cutting off her bracelet, bringing her home, her not crying for a month because in the Catholic orphanage where she spent the first several months of her life crying didn’t get anyone’s attention. Her bringing with her the date of her baptism, but no birthdays.

3) Girl grew and grew in her family, wondering what happened to her mother, her family – the place of her birth a place we associate with disruption and dissention, losing hope she would ever know who she was, where she came from, who her people were.

5) 40th birthday go to Vietnam, taking baptism certificate

6) Finding orphanage where she spent first several months of her life.

7) Meet nun, who points to bureau and then opens it up and looks at date of baptism, and then follows it across with index finger to the name of the girl
Reading there: born **August 9th, 1974, baptized Catholic in October:**

Name: Hoang Thi Kim Thanh, daughter of Hoang Thi Tu

The nun explaining so many teenage girls gave up their babies to the orphanage, especially if they weren't married.

8) Mom says: **Hoang Thi Tu gave her life; I gave her a lifetime.**

9) May we name the names of the people who helped have a lifetime, who redeemed us time and time again....Say them in the space_____.

Amen.

Hymn: **“One More Step” - #168**